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S. Korea Looks Beyond Olympics

Country Must Resolve Serious Conflicts Set Aside for Games

By Fred Hiatt
Washington Post Foreign Service

SEOUL, Oct. 2—A middle-aged South Korean bureaucrat, who had not been swept away by Olympic fever, watched on television as three Korean girls won the gold, silver and bronze medals in archery.

"They were about my daughter's age, and as they walked up to accept their medals, they were smiling bashfully, but they also showed a kind of inner confidence," he said. "And, I thought, maybe this is our next generation."

There is a consensus here that South Korea has bolstered its confidence through the successful staging of the Olympic Games—and that the nation will need every ounce of that confidence in the coming months.

Even before the flame was extinguished in today's closing ceremony, this hard-charging, fast-developing

nation was focusing on what comes next. And while most politicians and diplomats said they are optimistic about South Korea's future, they also forecast some rocky times as the nation faces conflicts and problems that it submerged in the interests of Olympic peace.

"We don't have time for a post-Olympic letdown," said a newspaper editor. "We'll jump right into the political debate."

That debate will focus on several key issues, including the U.S.-South Korean relationship and Seoul's nascent ties with the communist world, especially its long-time rival North Korea. But at the top of the agenda will be what South Koreans call democratization: their continuing experiment in trying to move peacefully from decades of authoritarian military rule to a civilian-ruled, pluralistic society.

The debate is likely to be charged with tension between the right wing and military, who worry about the

erosion of order in the face of a North Korean threat, and opposition forces who fear the conservative establishment has not reconciled itself to democracy.

"If President Roh Tae Woo has any single goal, I think democracy, without any adjectives, without any conditions, is the one," said Hyun Hong Choo, minister for legislative affairs. "And in doing so, he has to respond to all these exploding demands from students, laborers, the underprivileged class, the middle class."

Opposition leader Kim Dae Jung said he has the same goal. "Now that the Olympic Games have ended, there is no more excuse."

But if everyone wants democracy, few agree on exactly what it means or how to accomplish the goal. Major strides have been made, including last December's direct presidential election, in which Roh emerged victorious, and this year's parliamentary elections, in which the ruling party lost its majority for the first time.

But much more needs to be done to achieve real democracy. And without the restraining influence of the Olympics and the world attention that the Games focused on the country, the issues are likely to be debated with more emotion. Some foresee more violence.

Some South Koreans fear the nation's mood may turn

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sour as it enters a kind of post-Olympic depression. After seven years and more than \$3 billion of preparations, they say, South Korea will suddenly find itself without a unifying goal.

In particular, they say, some Seoul residents may feel resentful that despite years of government propaganda, their lives will not seem improved by the Games and the money spent on them, and a post-Olympic inflationary cycle could make life seem a bit worse.

But many Seoul residents do not believe the nation will descend into depression or disorder. Many South Koreans never seemed as excited about the Olympics as the government wanted them to be. Now they are simply focusing on the next challenge.

Before South Korea can start shaping the future, however, it faces the explosive challenge of coming to terms with its past. Former general and president Chun Doo Hwan, who took power in a 1980 coup and retired in February, is so unpopular that he could not attend the opening ceremony of the Games he helped bring to Seoul.

The opposition—and, polls show, a large majority of South Koreans—want to see the alleged corruption and abuse of power of Chun's years exposed. The demands pose a delicate challenge for Roh. Although he was elected in balloting considered by independent observers to be essentially fair, Roh is a retired general

who supported Chun's coup and served in his administration. Roh, moreover, is only the most visible of many Chun holdovers.

The administration thus must satisfy public demand for justice without implicating itself, triggering large-scale purges or alienating its right-wing supporters. Its hope, politicians here say, is to persuade Chun to apologize and move on to other issues as quickly as possible.

On the domestic front, Hyun said, the country must democratize those institutions that atrophied under authoritarian rule: political parties, a free press, labor unions, the National Assembly.

"Our democracy is still in an infantile stage, and we need more time to strengthen the infrastructure," Hyun said. "We'll see some confusion along the way."

For the opposition, the test of democracy will be in the dismantling of old, repressive laws and bureaucracies, the holding of elections for local officials for the first time in three decades and the loosening of labor laws that have helped force many workers to contribute to South Korea's economic miracle without sharing its benefits.

Indeed, many politicians and diplomats say the economy may be the key; with continued growth and a fairer distribution of wealth, political development, too, will be nurtured.

And, while leftist students and right-wing hard-liners can be expected to make the most noise, observers here say they are encouraged that all political parties seem

to be fighting to claim the center. That mainstream, bolstered by the successful staging of the Olympics, seems eager for continued stability. Militant students, for example, got virtually no support in their protests before and during the Games.

But beyond their political development at home, South Koreans are looking beyond their own borders. Having hosted the largest Olympics of all time, having shown that a developing country can handle the logistics and the security of the event, having brought the Soviet Union and the United States to the same Olympics for the first time in 12 years, South Koreans want to be players in world diplomacy.

The government pushed hard for its foreign minister to address the United Nations for the first time last week. It has agreed to establish ties with Hungary, its first official link to a communist country. Despite a per capita gross national product of less than \$3,000, it is beginning to distribute foreign aid.

Most of all, after decades of division and hostility toward the communist North, South Koreans are hoping to see a warming in relations. Reunification is a heartfelt issue for almost every South Korean, especially the quarter of the population with relatives across the border, and expectations are high for a breakthrough. Such expectations, however, make some South Koreans nervous, since they believe the unpredictable North Korean government is unlikely to change while ruler Kim Il Sung lives.